

Message Text

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PAGE 01 LAGOS 00156 071529Z

44

ACTION AF-06

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 DOTE-00 CIAE-00 COME-00 EB-07 INR-07

LAB-04 NSAE-00 RSC-01 SIL-01 DODE-00 PM-03 H-01 L-02

NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 OMB-01 CIEP-01

TRSE-00 AID-05 PC-01 /071 W

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R 071349Z JAN 75

FM AMEMBASSY LAGOS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7452

INFO AMCONSUL IBADAN

AMCONSUL KADUNA

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E.O.: 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINS, NI

SUBJ: FMG PUT TO THE TEST

SUMMARY: STRIKE BY LONG-DISTANCE TRUCK DRIVERS IS CAUSING SERIOUS ECONOMIC DISLOCATIONS, AND WILL REQUIRE URGENT FMG ATTENTION IF FURTHER DISRUPTION IS TO BE AVERTED. END SUMMARY.

1. SINCE FIRST OF YEAR, NIGERIAN ECONOMY SUFFERING SERIOUS DISLOCATION IN WAKE STRIKE BY BULK OF NATION'S LONG-DISTANCE TRUCK DRIVERS. MOST SERIOUS IMPACT HAS COME FROM WITHDRAWAL FROM ROADS OF NEARLY ALL TANK TRUCKS DELIVERING FUEL FROM PORTS AND REFINERY TO OTHER SECTIONS OF COUNTRY. IN PAST COUPLE OF DAYS, MOST STATIONS THROUGHOUT NIGERIA HAVE BEGUN TO RUN DRY, THUS FORCING OTHER VEHICLES OFF ROADS.

2. ACTION BY TRUCK DRIVERS PROVOKED BY THEIR UNHAPPINESS OVER INSTITUTION OF FIRST "MOBILE COURTS" DEALING WITH TRAFFIC OFFENSES, INITIAL EXPERIMENT WITH THESE COURTS, DESIGNED TO RELIEVE OVERBURDENED REGULAR JUDICIAL SYSTEM OF TRAFFIC OFFENSES, WAS BEGUN IN KWARA STATE IN LATE NOVEMBER.

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PAGE 02 LAGOS 00156 071529Z

DRIVERS ALLEGE THAT COURTS HAVE BEEN ARBITRARY IN THEIR

OPERATIONS, GUILTY OF BRIBERY AND EXTORTION, AND UNFAIR IN PENALIZING DRIVERS RATHER THAN OWNERS FOR SAFETY DEFECTS. GOVERNMENT INSISTS THAT COURTS HAVE PROVIDED EXPEDITIOUS HANDLING OF TRAFFIC CASES, HAVE OPERATED WELL DESPITE SOME TEETHING PROBLEMS, AND HAVE SHARPLY REDUCED ACCIDENT RATE IN KWARA STATE.

3. BRIEF LOCAL ACTION BY TAXI DRIVERS WITHIN KWARA STATE BROKEN BY STATE GOVERNMENT, WHICH FLOODED STREETS WITH OFFICIAL VEHICLES OFFERING FREE TRANSPORTATION. NO ACTION HAS THUS FAR BEEN TAKEN BY EITHER STATE OR FMG TO DEAL WITH PROBLEM OF LONG-DISTANCE TRUCKS.

4. COMMENT: REGARDLESS OF WHERE TRUTH LIES IN DISPUTE OVER MOBILE COURTS, FMG WILL ALMOST CERTAINLY BE UNWILLING TO ABANDON SYSTEM UNDER PRESSURE FROM DRIVERS. AVAILABLE OPTIONS PRESUMABLY INCLUDE DIRECT INTERVENTION ON KWARA STATE GOVERNMENT MODEL OR SOME COMPROMISE REGARDING COURT OPERATION AND TIMING FOR EXTENSION OF SYSTEM TO OTHER STATES. TO DATE, HOWEVER, FMG STILL APPEARS PREOCCUPIED WITH ITS REORGANIZATION PROBLEMS (LAGOS 0054) AND HAS GIVEN NO INDICATION OF ITS INTENTION. WITH ECONOMY SLOWLY GRINDING DOWN, URGENT ATTENTION TO DRIVER STRIKE INCREASINGLY NEEDED IF FURTHER ECONOMIC DISLOCATION TO BE AVERTED.

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